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ABSTRACT

Virtually no school is safe from violence. FBI statistics, which show that juvenile crimes actually peaked during the mid-1970s, are at odds with the public perception that crime rates among young people are at an all-time high. The FBI acknowledges, however, that the crimes committed by young people tend to be more serious than in the past, and that juvenile offenders are being arrested at younger ages. This brief presents statistics on youthful crime and trends in state initiatives to control it. The document outlines the cost for safe schools and describes in detail safe-schools legislation passed in six southeastern states during 1993-95. Florida and North Carolina take a comprehensive approach; Georgia employs school-level, school-based initiatives; and South Carolina, Alabama, and Mississippi focus primarily on criminal and juvenile justice approaches. The document also describes the "zero-tolerance" policy and the issue of "reasonable force" in responding to student violence. The formation of communitywide planning teams is recommended. Four tables, one figure, and a list of resource organizations are included. (Contains 53 references.) (LMI)

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SERVE POLICY BRIEF

SAFE SCHOOLS: What the Southeast is Doing

January 1996

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Safety in Schools

Youth crime is not new. In 1948, Ralph Banay wrote in *Youth in Despair*, "The problem of juvenile delinquency, as President Truman has affirmed, is of serious concern to the whole country" (Kappan, 1995). Today, youth crime and violence in schools are national issues. The most recent Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll on education in America cites school violence as one of the top five concerns of Americans. Virtually no school is immune from violence. Crime and violence preoccupy students' minds, disrupt the normal functioning of the school environment, and take away dollars from instructional materials, staff development, and other educational needs.

Trends

Less Alarming Statistics, More Alarming Violence?

Crime in America *seems* much more prevalent now than a decade and a half ago, when experts say the latest wave of mayhem began with the appearance of crack and kids with guns (Kappan, 1995). According to FBI statistics, however, juvenile crimes actually peaked in the mid-1970's (Kappan, 1995). FBI arrest figures dispute the public perception that more young people are in trouble with the law than ever before. The FBI acknowledges, however, that the kinds of crimes young people commit today are more serious than in the past, and youthful criminals are becoming younger and younger.

It is clear is that children and youth are becoming more violent at earlier ages. Many are committing more violent crimes, often repeatedly, before they even become teenagers. In 1990, youth arrests accounted for 15 percent of all arrests, down from an all-time high of 26 percent in 1975 and below the 1960 percentage. Unfortunately, the numbers of youths under age 18 arrested for murder continued to climb in 1992 compared to previous years (Kappan, 1995).

Making Schools Safe

Numbing statistics have forced states across the country, including those in the Southeast, to address the issues of violence and school safety. States have moved to discourage crime and violence on school grounds as well as in surrounding communities, as legislatures have worked to stiffen laws governing juveniles and juvenile crime. Colorado, for example, created a separate penal system for juvenile weapon offenders and ordered that the records of those juveniles be made public. California and Virginia require that violent students' records be sent to schools and shared with teachers. Massachusetts law allows principals to suspend students charged with a felony and to expel convicted felons from school. And in Connecticut, the chief state attorney has assigned two special prosecutors to cope with a surge of violence in Hartford-area schools (AEL, 1994).

A 1995 National Governors' Association (NGA) survey and subsequent report finds that most state initiatives target youth who have already committed a violent crime. The survey suggests that the emergence of these initiatives reflects a growing lack of confidence in juvenile justice systems to treat and rehabilitate violent juvenile offenders, and an increasing public demand for retribution, punishment, and long-term incarceration (Romero, 1995).

Most state initiatives passed between 1992 and 1994 address the legal process under which violent juvenile offenders are prosecuted and treated, with the majority of these designed to ensure that youth accused of violent offenses are treated more like adults. Some states have also implemented preventive strategies to make schools safe, identify and serve at-risk children and youth, mobilize communities, and provide productive activities for children and adolescents (Romero, 1995).

The Costs for Safe Schools

According to a forthcoming U.S. Public Health Service publication entitled *Violence Prevention: A Public Health Challenge for the 1990s*, many of the costs to state and local governments associated with youth violence and safe schools are immediate, while others become evident only in the long term. Costs readily identified include those for health care, school security, law enforcement, juvenile correctional facilities, and prisons (Romero, 1995).

According to the NGA survey, the public can expect increased operating costs for state juvenile and criminal justice systems based on the likely convergence of the following trends:

- a significant increase, by the year 2005, in the number of youth ages fifteen to nineteen;

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- continued rising rates of violent youth crime; and
- more aggressive law enforcement efforts and longer sentences for violent offenders.

(Romero, 1995)

States and Multiple Strategies

Experts on youth violence believe multiple strategies are required to address the problem effectively. They advocate comprehensive interventions that address multiple risk factors within individuals, families, schools, and peer groups, and change the way these factors interact to produce violent behaviors. The NGA report asserts that state legislatures have typically focused on three kinds of strategies: primary (prevention), secondary (intervention), and tertiary ("get tough") policies (Romero, 1995). Prevention strategies aim to eliminate the possibility that a violent act will occur. Interventions target students at greatest risk, attempting to minimize the opportunity for violence. "Get tough" polices target offenders after a violent act has been committed. The NGA survey reveals the majority of state strategies are on the "get tough" level with legislative, judicial, and programmatic initiatives within criminal and juvenile justice systems designed to identify, apprehend, prosecute, confine, punish, treat, and monitor violent juvenile offenders (Romero, 1995). The survey cautions that relying primarily on a "get tough" approach may prove costly to states. Research suggests that these approaches may do little to modify future violent behavior, thus allowing the fiscal strain on state correctional systems to increase (Romero, 1995).

Safe Schools Legislation in the Southeast, 1993-95

States in the Southeast fall into three categories with regard to safe schools legislation. Florida and North Carolina take a comprehensive approach. Georgia employs school-level/school-based initiatives. South Carolina, Alabama, and Mississippi focus primarily on criminal and juvenile justice approaches.

Alabama

In 1994 the Alabama legislature assumed a "get tough" posture and passed nine laws addressing crime and violence in public schools. These laws require school boards to adopt and distribute to parents written policies regarding school conduct and to establish school discipline plans. Three of the laws, known as the *Parent Responsibility Act*, focus on the educational responsibilities, including the financial liabilities, of parents, guardians, or other persons having custody of school-age children (W. Teague, personal communications, October 7, 1994).

The *Parent Responsibility Act* includes:

- Senate Bill 71 (Act 94-782)—requires local boards of education to develop and distribute school behavior policies to parents.
- Senate Bill 73 (Act 94-819)—makes parents liable for damages to school property caused by children under 18 years of age.
- Senate Bill 77 (Act 94-784)—amends Section 16-1.24.1, Code of Alabama 1975, to provide for further discipline in the schools and the establishment of school discipline plans.

Other laws passed in 1994 include:

- Senate Bill 70 (Act 94-820)—makes provisions for the suspension of driver's licenses for persons under the age of 19 convicted of possession of a pistol on school premises.
- Senate Bill 72 (Act 94-817)—provides for a felony charge against certain persons in possession of a weapon while on the premises of a public school.
- Senate Bill 74 (Act 94-783)—subjects a person who unlawfully sells, furnishes, or gives a controlled substance to a minor to certain civil liability.
- Senate Bill 75 (Act 94-787)—requires local boards of education to establish school disciplinary programs for disruptive students.
- Senate Bill 78 (Act 94-793)—amends Section 16-1-14, Code of Alabama 1975, to require local boards of education to publish and distribute rules and regulations concerning behavior and discipline.
- Senate Bill 79 (Act 94-794)—amends Section 13A-6-21, Code of Alabama 1975, to make it a felony to assault teachers, other employees of public education institutions, or peace officers.

Alabama passed additional legislation regarding safe schools in 1995. One amendment attached to a corporal punishment bill provides immunity to teachers and administrators who report suspected student drug abuse. Another bill proposed by the governor and passed requires school boards to issue arrest warrants against persons who assault teachers (ASBA, 1995).

The *Gun Free Schools Act* was also passed in 1995. It requires local school boards to implement policies requiring a one-year expulsion of students who possess a firearm in school buildings, on school grounds, on school buses, or at any school-sponsored function. Students expelled under provisions of the bill can attend alternative schools (ASBA, 1995).

Homicide Death Rates for Males Ages Fifteen to Twenty-four in Selected Countries, 1992

Compared with other industrialized nations, America's rate of youth violence is staggering. In 1992 the homicide rate-the number of homicide deaths per 100,000-among U.S. males ages fifteen to twenty-four was 37.3, over eight times higher than the comparable rate in Italy (Snyder and Sickmund, 1995).

Rates represent the number of homicide deaths per 100,000 among each nation's male, fifteen to twenty-four-old population in 1992.

Source: Children's Defense Fund, "Black Child Crisis: A Generation Under Threat," *CDF Reports*, Vol. 16, No. 2, (January 1995).

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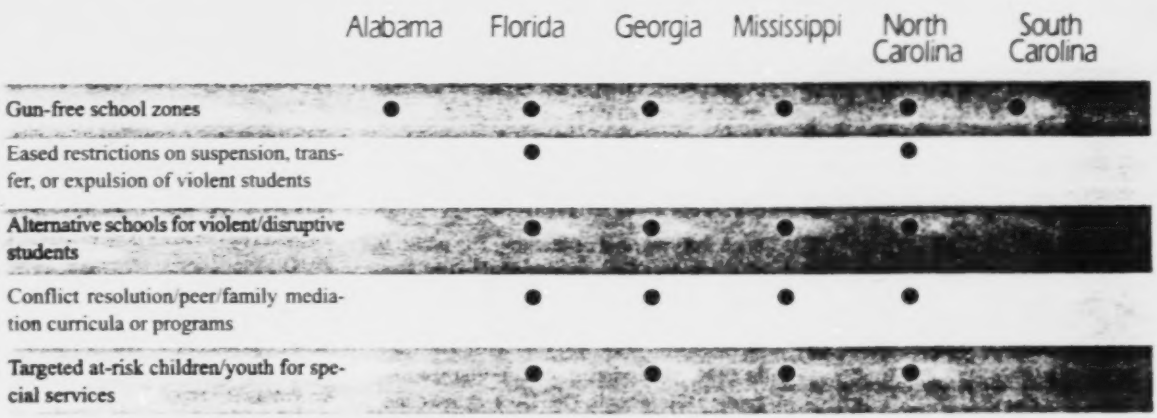
State-level, School-based Initiatives to Address Youth Violence Implemented Between 1992 and 1995



Source: National Governors' Association Survey, 1995.

Florida

Florida was one of two southeastern states in 1994 (along with North Carolina) to enact omnibus juvenile justice legislative packages that include major reforms in the juvenile code and other areas. A multi-faceted effort to reduce youth violence and make schools safe focuses on accelerated juvenile court processing; children, youth, and family services; school-based initiatives; community wide efforts; changes to the juvenile justice code; public education efforts; and school security, including funding to school districts to enhance security measures (Romero, 1995).

The 1994 Florida legislature passed a law creating a new Department of Juvenile Justice, which now includes several offices from various agencies and the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services' Juvenile Justice Program Office. It also:

- expanded the Youthful Offender Program within the Department of Corrections
- established the Juvenile Justice Advisory Board under the Executive Office of the Governor, and
- established the Juvenile Justice Standards and Training Council, a commission appointed by the Secretary of Juvenile Justice to improve and expand standards and training for juvenile justice personnel.

This new law assumes a different philosophical approach to juvenile justice. It relaxes confidentiality requirements, allowing law enforcement, education, and juvenile justice agencies to share specific information with each other and the public. It also authorizes the courts to place a delinquent child into detention or administer alternative sanctions; revises detention and boot camp criteria; extends post-adjudicatory detention for children awaiting residential commitment programs; and establishes a boot camp continuum with the addition of a low-risk residential boot camp program and a maximum risk residential commitment program. This new omnibus law also addresses numerous educational issues, including dropout and truancy prevention; suspension and expulsion; character education; school readiness; after-school safety; local option curfews; and alternative education programs in residential school facilities for juvenile offenders (Florida Department of Education, 1994).

In 1995 Florida passed legislation regarding "second chance" schools (H2525). This legislation allows school districts to engage in cooperative agreements with the Department of Juvenile Justice, private providers, state and local law enforcement, and other state agencies to provide an educational environment for disruptive or violent students or for those who have committed serious offenses. As partnership programs, "second-chance" schools are eligible for waivers of certain education regulations from the Commissioner of Education.

Students may be assigned to a "second chance" school if they habitually exhibit disruptive behavior, interfere with their own learning or the education of others, require attention and assistance beyond that which the traditional program can provide, or commit a serious offense, which warrants suspension or expulsion from school. Serious offenses include threatening the general welfare of students or others, possession of weapons or drugs, and harassment or verbal abuse of school personnel or students. School boards are encouraged to use alternative programs prior to assigning students to "second chance" schools. Students in "second chance" schools who exhibit academic and social progress and who wish to return to a traditional school are evaluated by school district personnel before being allowed to reenter.

Georgia

Georgia is combating school violence through intervention and "get tough" policies. Georgia's *School Safety and Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 1994* requires every public school to prepare a school safety plan with community input. The law prohibits weapons on school property or at school functions and allows schools to request state funding for the installation of safety equipment. It also requires principals to notify the appropriate law

According to the Children's Defense Fund, every two days guns kill the equivalent of a class of 25 youngsters and injure 60 more. Adolescents between the ages of 10 and 19 are killed with a gun at a rate of one every three hours *(Snyder and Sickmund, 1995)*.

Juveniles were responsible for 13% of all violent crimes and 23% of all property crimes in 1992.

The juvenile contribution to the crime problem in the U.S. in 1992 varied considerably with the nature of the offense. Based on 1992 clearance data, juveniles were responsible for:

9% of murders
12% of aggravated assaults
14% of forcible rapes
16% of robberies
20% of burglaries
23% of larceny-thefts
24% of motor vehicle thefts
42% of arsons

enforcement agency about any loitering on school property, which is now a misdemeanor of a "high and aggravated nature." The act also makes disrupting school a misdemeanor of a "high and aggravated nature."

Georgia now requires that schools be notified if a student has a history of delinquency, and students committing prohibited acts must be reported to police. Further, teachers and school employees are required to report:

- aggravated assault, if a firearm is involved;
- aggravated battery;
- sexual offenses;
- possession of weapons at school functions or within school safety zones;
- illegal possession of a pistol by persons under 18; and
- possession of marijuana and controlled substances.

Additionally, Georgia has expanded services for at-risk students through increased funding for its Family Connection initiative, which provides at-risk children and youth with various social services at school during and after school hours. These services include recreation, tutoring, and counseling. The initiative also includes a focus on strengthening troubled families (Romero, 1995).

Mississippi

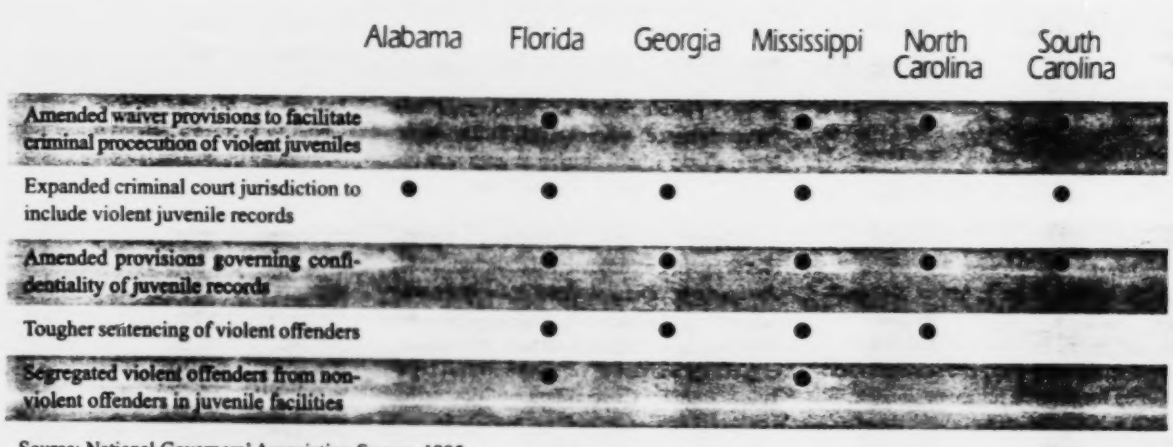
In 1994, Mississippi passed several laws regarding safe schools. One law requires delinquent juveniles who attend school as a condition of probation to maintain a passing grade in at least four courses. Others amend several Mississippi education codes in an attempt to curb student misconduct at school. For example, it is now a felony for any person to bring guns or other dangerous weapons onto school property; and youth courts are prevented from ordering the enrollment or re-enrollment of students suspended or expelled for weapons possession on school grounds or for an offense involving a threat to the safety of other persons. Also, local superintendents are required to notify the youth court by affidavit of any crime committed by a student on school property or during any school-related activity and provide the identity of the student committing the crime. Parents are also held liable in the new law for criminal fines levied against students for unlawful activity on school grounds (MSBA Update, 1994).

Another 1994 law (SB2634) withdraws confidentiality for juveniles judged delinquent two or more times in acts that would be considered a felony if committed by adults. Confidentiality is also stripped for youth found guilty of unlawful possession of a firearm. In both instances, the names and addresses of offenders can be made public (MSBA Update, 1994).

The 1994 legislation (SB2767) additionally requires that the youth court be notified when a child is expelled from public schools and given the reason for expulsion. It also removes jurisdiction of the youth court in offenses involving the use or possession of a firearm by children 15 years or older if the offenses would be considered a felony if committed by an adult. Jurisdiction now rests with the circuit court. Finally, the law bars any student expelled for possession of a weapon or other felonious conduct from being assigned to an alternative school program (MSBA Update, 1994).

Though school safety was not as visible an issue in 1995, the state legislature passed laws regarding alternative schools (SB2510), clarification of weapons possession (SB2500), the

State Criminal and Juvenile Justice Initiatives to Address Youth Violence Implemented Between 1992 and 1994


Alabama
Florida
Georgia
Mississippi
North Carolina
South Carolina
Amended waiver provisions to facilitate criminal procecution of violent juveniles
Expanded criminal court jurisdiction to include violent juvenile records
Amended provisions governing confidentiality of juvenile records
Tougher sentencing of violent offenders
Segregated violent offenders from non-violent offenders in juvenile facilities

Source: National Governors' Association Survey, 1995.

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Juvenile Arrest Rates for Violent Crimes in Six Southeastern States, 1992

	Alabama	Florida	Georgia	Mississippi	North Carolina	South Carolina
% of Local Jurisdictions Reporting	93	92	72	35	97	96
Murder	11	12	6	15	14	6
Forcible Rape	9	29	14	31	13	20
Robbery	61	247	62	73	72	28
Aggravated Assault	139	450	169	105	298	147

(Snyder and Sickmund, 1995)

students' rights to appeal disciplinary actions to school boards (SB2947), and clarification of the process and subsequent fines for parents who refuse to attend disciplinary conferences (SB3031) (MSBA Update, 1995).

Mississippi has also established a center for prevention of school violence and hotline within the Department of Education and a school violence prevention grant program, called Support Our Students, or SOS.

North Carolina

In 1993, North Carolina began to address the issues of youth crime and student violence earlier than other states. Like Florida, North Carolina takes a comprehensive approach to school safety and violence. In 1993, the General Assembly passed six laws related to safe schools, including laws that allowed parental leave. Legislation includes:

- Senate Bill 989 (Chapter 509)—requires employers to grant leave at a mutually agreed upon time to employees for involvement at their childrens' schools, and encourages schools to implement parent involvement and conflict resolution programs.
- Senate Bill 892 (Chapter 462)—mandates that delinquent juveniles required to attend school as a condition of probation must maintain passing grades in four courses.
- Senate Bill 793 (Chapter 259)—makes it a misdemeanor for a person under eighteen years of age to possess or carry a handgun and for anyone to sell or transfer any handgun to a person who is under eighteen years of age.
- House Bill 1092 (Chapter 369)—requires juvenile court counselors to notify school officials in certain cases when a juvenile is adjudicated delinquent and is ordered to attend school as a condition of probation.
- House Bill 1009 (Chapter 327)—requires school principals to report certain acts occurring on school property to law enforcement.
- House Bill 1008 (Chapter 558)—makes it a felony to possess or carry a firearm or explosive on educational property or to cause, encourage, or aid a minor to possess or carry a firearm or explosive; to cause, encourage, or aid a minor to take or possess other types of weapons on educational property; and to fail to store firearms in a reasonable manner for the protection of minors.

The legislation also established the Intervention/Prevention Grant Program for North Carolina School Children, which provides grants to schools to develop locally designed, innovative programs that target juvenile crime. Several model programs are highlighted in the law, including:

- School-based Resource Centers: School-based centers coordinate the delivery of comprehensive and integrated services to children in or near a school.
- After-School Programs: Programs that provide high-quality, educational and recreational activities to students after the regular school day.
- Cities in Schools: A community partnership among public agencies.
- Alternative Learning: Provides individualized programs in a caring atmosphere outside the standard classroom setting.
- Safe Schools: A program for making schools safe for students and school employees, which may involve peer mediation and conflict resolution activities.

(State Board of Education, 1995)

In 1995, Senate Bill 26 enabled local boards of education to expel students from school whose continued presence constitutes a clear threat to the safety of other students or employees. North Carolina has allocated $12 million toward alternative schools for such students (Romero, 1995).

Also, North Carolina has provided $5 million for after-school programs for middle school students; $18 million for additional guidance counselors, psychologists, and social workers to target at-risk youth for services; and a Center for the Prevention of School Violence (Romero, 1995).

South Carolina

Though several pieces of education legislation were proposed in the 1994 South Carolina legislature, only a few made it through the entire process to become law. These, primarily "get tough" policies, included:

- House Bill 3442—School Searches—allows principals or their designees to conduct reasonable searches of student property with or without probable cause. It permits searches of school visitors and their property and requires the state to pay for school signs informing visitors of the provisions of this act. All searches must be in compliance with the "reasonableness standard" set out by the United States Supreme Court in 1985 (New Jersey v. T.L.O.).
- House Bill 3550—Calling Law Enforcement—requires school administrators to

Figure 1

Resistance Levels

	Category	Definition	School Examples
6	Aggravated Physical	Resistance intended or likely to cause injury	An attack with a weapon
5	Aggressive Physical	Resistance directed against a lawful authority	A push or a strike that does not cause injury
4	Active Physical	Resistance that is active and energetic in nature	Pulling away or running away
3	Passive Physical	Resistance that is passive and static in nature	Refusal to follow a lawful order
2	Verbal	Resistance that is spoken	Verbal defiance or spoken refusal to obey
1	Presence	Resistance in the form of presence or occurrence in an unauthorized place	A trespass by a student from a different school or by a suspended student

(Frisby & Beckham, 1993)

contact law enforcement authorities immediately upon notice of injury or threat of injury to persons or property, including threats at a school-sanctioned or sponsored activity.

- House Bill 5058 (Originally the Juvenile Justice and Schools Safety bill)—added onto a "train" of amendments to legislation of which only a matching grant ($25,000 per county) for school safety coordinators and the purchase and training in the use of metal detectors was passed. However, even these matching grants and metal detector components were not funded for FY 95-96.

House Bill 4414 (1994), the Schoolhouse Safety Alliance Act, was designed to establish a Schoolhouse Safety Resource Center at the state department of education to evaluate best practices for dealing with student violence and provide training in the area of school safety for teachers and administrators. This bill, which was eventually vetoed, would have required coordination between schools and local agencies working with families, case management of students, with mandatory parental involvement for children with recurring aggressive behaviors, and district plans for violence prevention (South Carolina Department of Education, 1995).

In the 1995 legislative session, the General Assembly passed the *Gun-Free Schools Act*, which calls for at least one year's expulsion of students who carry firearms to school or possess them in school.

One Strategy—Zero Tolerance

According to estimates by the National School Safety Center (1990) "more than 200,000 students pack weapons along with their school lunches and bring them into the learning environment every day." Statistics from the center show that last year guns led to 35 deaths and 92 injuries in schools. Justice Department studies found that 22 percent of inner-city boys own guns and the National Education Association calculates that on any given day about 160,000 students stay home because of fear of violence in or on the way to school (National Education Association, 1993).

Mindful of these troubling statistics, President Clinton announced in October 1994 an executive order directing the states to require all school districts to enact a "zero tolerance" policy and expel for one year any student who brings a gun to school. Legislation known as the Gun-Free Schools Act (GFSA) also requires states receiving funds from the *Improving America's Schools Act of 1994* (IASA) expel students who carry guns (Note: This year, a federal statute establishing "gun-free zones" within 1,000 feet of school property was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court).

In September 1994, even before the President's executive order, the Florida State Board of Education adopted a new rule, *Zero Tolerance for School-Related Violent Crime*. The rule implements the State Board of Education's "zero tolerance" policy on violence, crime, and weapons as part of Florida's comprehensive approach to reducing school violence and crime. This policy requires school districts to:

- Invoke the most severe consequences provided for in the Code of Student Conduct when dealing with students who engage in violent criminal acts on school property, on school transportation, or during school-sponsored activities and notify a local law enforcement agency when an adult or a student commits the such acts;
- Adopt a process for facilitating active communication and cooperation between schools and law enforcement agencies, including the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services and the Department of Juvenile Justice, to help school officials make the best decisions regarding students' educational services and placement; and
- Assist teachers and other school personnel, consistent with school board policies and the Code of Student Conduct, to act decisively and effectively when dealing with violent and disruptive youth.

(R.L. Bedford, personal communication, September 26, 1994)

One Policy Issue: Teachers, Students and "Reasonable Force"

Teachers and principals increasingly need and want to be informed about how to respond to threats from students, and how much force is appropriate to use in confrontations with students. For example, the "zero tolerance" rule in Florida authorizes teachers to use "reasonable force" but does not define "reasonable force" or the likely official response for exceeding "reasonable force" standards. Without further clarification of this term, school administrators and teachers may employ tactics that are inappropriate, ineffective, excessive, aggravating, or that may escalate a confrontational situation (Frisby & Beckham, 1993).

In Florida, two researchers, a police lieutenant, and a professor of educational administration from Florida State University have done research on the use of "reasonable force" by teachers and administrators. They were concerned that educators in Florida are typically unaware what constitutes "reasonable force" until they are called before a review board for reprimand. The results of their work is an overview of general guidelines that might be used

in confrontational situations in schools (Frisby & Beckham, 1993).

To understand "use of force," it is necessary to review six categories or levels that violence or threats of violence can take (See Figure 1).

Police force tactics state that a police officer is to use only that level of response necessary to control the situation. Administrators and teachers also need a variety of techniques to respond to acts of violence in a school setting. Skills in verbal persuasion are obviously critical. According to Frisby and Beckham, unarmed self-defense tactics, come-along holds, and restraint and physical compliance measures may ultimately become part of a school administrator's repertoire. School policies on "use of force" that parallel state standards could protect schools from liability as well as provide needed guidance to employees in situations involving violence or threats of violence (Frisby & Beckham, 1993).

Planning for School Safety

Restoring schools to safe places of learning requires competence, commitment, courage, and care. There is, however, no one way to make schools safe and violence-free. Each situation is unique and requires the involvement of the local community in reviewing the factors that affect school safety and creating a planning team (National Education Center, 1995).

Planning teams should include parents, students, teachers, administrators, counselors, and community agencies. Law enforcement and service agencies should also be involved. These teams should be charged with developing a comprehensive safety plan that can then be approved by the local school district governing board.

Planners must understand how personal characteristics positively or negatively affect the other dimensions of the school. School safety is, after all, affected by school culture; that is, the collection of assumptions, expectations, and knowledge that students, parents, and staff bring to a school about how the school should function and how individuals in the school should act. These beliefs and values govern the day-to-day behaviors of everyone involved with the school, and define acceptable behavior. A sense of belonging and commitment to the school by students and staff is an essential factor for school safety (Stephens, 1995).

Teachers and "Reasonable Force"

The Florida Education Practices Commission (EPC) decided 224 teacher discipline cases in 1992-93. To define what EPC considered use of proper or "reasonable force" by teachers and administrators, Lt. David Frisby of the Tallahassee Police Department conducted a study of thirty-one cases brought before the EPC where "excessive" or "reasonable force" may have been a factor in the decisions handed down by the EPC. The purpose of the study was to identify the teacher behavior, student behavior and the mitigating and aggravating factors that influence the judgments of the EPC in suspending or revoking teacher licenses. Frisby identified three levels of student disruption as "verbal disruption" (S1), "property damage" (S2), and "personal threat" (S3), and three levels of teacher behavior as "verbal control (T1), "touch control" (T2), and "defense" (T3).

In the EPC summary there were 13 cases of S1-T2 interactions and 7 cases of S1-T3 interactions. Cases most noted in 92-93 were cases of teachers using some form of hands-on control (T2) which did not harm or injure the student, and was generally in response to the student's verbal disruption (S1) of the education process.

From his review of the cases, Frisby concluded that 1) the EPC expects teachers to control verbal disruption with verbal control techniques, 2) as the level of teacher force to control verbal disruptions rises from T2 to T3, teachers receive more serious punishments, and 3) the EPC allowed teachers use of higher levels of force to protect themselves.

Other findings:

- Where the S1-T2 cases tended to get probation, the S1-T3 cases tended to get probation *and* suspension.
- A lack of criminal finding by the police appeared to mitigate for the teacher in serious cases.
- Previous history of warning to teachers usually brought serious EPC punishment.
- Youth (tender age) of the student victim appeared to be a factor.

(Frisby, 1994)

Resources

Bureau of Justice Assistance
Clearinghouse
Box 6000
Rockville, MD 20849
800-688-4252

The Character Education Partnership
1250 N. Pitt St.
Alexandria, VA 22314
703-739-9515

Children's Creative Response to Conflict Program
Box 271
Nyack, NY 10960
914-353-1796

Kids + Guns = A Deadly Equation
1450 Northeast 2nd Ave.
Room 523A
Miami, FL 33132
305-995-1986

National Alliance for Safe Schools
9344 Lanham-Severn Rd.
Suite 102
Lanham, MD 20706
301-306-0200

National Association of Secondary School Principals
1904 Association Dr.
Reston, VA 22091
703-860-0200.

National Dropout Prevention Center
Clemson University
215 Martin St.
Clemson, SC 29634-5111
803-656-2599

National Governors' Association
444 North Capitol Street
Washington, DC 20001-1512
202-624-5300

National School Safety Center
4165 Thousand Oaks Blvd.
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805-373-9977

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Violence Intervention Program
Durham Public Schools
Post Box 30002
Durham, NC 27702
919-560-2035

YES! Atlanta
955 Spring St.
Atlanta, GA 30309
404-874-6996

Youth Crime Watch
9300 S. Dadeland Blvd.
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